

I was contacted in June 2002 by proponents of LIPA's offshore windmill project. (This is not a "wind park." It is an industrial installation and one does not experience park-like tranquility upon encountering the sight, sounds and odors associated with power plants.) For the last three years, I have met with and given input to LIPA, FPL and AEG personnel about our concerns with the proposed windmills location; right-of-way for commercial fishing boats; and biological impact on migratory and spawning patterns of finfish and cephalopods. The application before your office results in severe negative impacts to New York's commercial fishing industry through its resolution of two of these issues.

The siting of this installation is based on aesthetic and aviary concerns taking precedence over economic impact to commercial fishermen and boat traffic safety. LIPA's Phase 2 Siting Assessment dated January 21, 2003 correctly identified the proposed windmill site as a rich source for loligo squid and a variety of finfish. Our dock alone will pack out over three million pounds of stock caught in the proposed windmill site this year. This translates to an economic impact of approximately ten million dollars in the village of Montauk. It represents roughly 1/5 of the income of this dock and the state's largest commercial fishing fleet that fishes from this harbor. These numbers do not include income to boats from Shinnecock to Brooklyn and from Rhode Island to New Jersey that also fish that area.

The configuration of these windmills may be cost-effective for FPL, but it will result in the total closure of approximately 21 square miles of the prime fishing grounds mentioned above to the most productive boats in the Mid-Atlantic fishing fleet. As it is laid out, the windmill installation has been likened by fishermen to placing steel posts at random on the Long Island Expressway. In fishing season, that area of ocean often accommodates up to fifty offshore trawlers, some of which are towing gear that stretches out one-half mile behind the boat. The fishing fleet works in proximity to gambling cruise ships and tug-propelled barges that are not allowed in the shipping lanes.

This past April, I suggested to Louis "Coke" Coakley, Principal Environmental Specialist for FPL, that the windmills be reconfigured in three lines running parallel to the shore, one mile apart, with close to one-quarter mile between the windmills. This would allow mile-wide channels for the fleet to tow gear in east-west directions and enough room for a boat to get out of the channel when necessary. I made this suggestion because FPL personnel assured me that there would not be an "exclusionary zone" around this offshore installation and they were interested in working with us. My proposal and a number of follow-up calls did not produce a response from FPL or LIPA.

The document submitted to your department suggests that our input is of little value to the applicants. Outreach efforts by FPL seem to be a planned distraction that would lead the commercial fishing industry to believe we were still in a negotiating stage even as a proposal that ignored our concerns was submitted to your office for permit approval. After three years of such input, they are well aware of the fact that the fishermen most impacted by this power plant do not live anywhere near where the Public Information Open Houses were scheduled.

The third concern that has been raised by the commercial fishing community doesn't seem be addressed in the Public Notice document I have received; What will be the biological impact on migratory and spawning patterns of finfish and cephalopods? Are precautions being taken to ensure that the temporary disturbance caused by the hydraulic jet plow does not coincide with prime spawning seasons? If the windmills are being promoted as having artificial reef benefits, (again assuming no exclusionary zone will be enforced by the Coast Guard) how will this affect the predator-prey relationships in the existing ecosystem? Since loligo squid is, by volume, one of the most important stocks caught in the windmill area, are we certain that the vibrations or electric currents that will result from the windmills will not affect cephalopods?

As New York's busiest commercial fishing dock, we are opposed to building a power plant in fertile, pristine fishing grounds. If the developers placed more importance on natural resources, they would put the installation close to shore where discharge pipes and construction have already negatively impacted the environment. If they placed more importance on the

livelihoods of commercial fishermen who have fished these waters for decades and generations, the developers would at least submit a configuration that would allow for us to continue to do so.

I urge you to reject the windmill application. Thank you for this opportunity to submit my opinion.

Yours truly,

Sima Freierman
General Manager, Montauk Inlet Seafood Inc